

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 868

By Camper

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Jameela O'Karshalla
"Meela" Smith of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Jameela O'Karshalla Smith; and

WHEREAS, Jameela Smith was a woman of diverse interests and passions and an exceptional musical talent who sought to beautify the world around her; and

WHEREAS, the daughter of James and Joyce Jones, Mrs. Smith was born on August 27, 1989, into an influential family of musicians, both singers and instrumentalists, who are legends in their own right; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Smith exhibited a talent and passion for singing at an early age, and, recognizing her potential, her father formed a gospel quartet called Something Special, comprising Meela Smith and her cousins; singing in the group afforded Mrs. Smith the opportunity to cultivate the artistry of music and singing; and

WHEREAS, the group performed diligently and earned recognition from the Memphis news outlet *The Commercial Appeal* for two consecutive years, when Mrs. Smith, the youngest member of the group, was three and four years of age; when the group disassembled, she continued to participate in the performing arts, singing in school and community gospel choirs; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Smith lent her vocal talent to various choirs, including the Stop The Violence Choir, the gospel choir at Kirby High School, where she was a student, and the All-West Tennessee Choir; she was also a member of Echoes of Truth at Overton High School; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Kirby High School, where she was voted most talented, Mrs. Smith joined her brother's group, DMP, and traveled the country; she later formed her own gospel group, Essence, with three other young ladies; and

WHEREAS, while a nursing student at Tennessee State University (TSU), Mrs. Smith was also a member of the Gospel Choir of TSU and the ShowStoppers; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, Meela Smith recorded her first gospel single, "Soldier," written by Jeremy Jones, produced by her brothers Jeremy and Jamon, and featuring Pastor Darrel Petties; in 2018, she released a sophomore single, also written by Jeremy, titled "Hallelujah." She also sang background vocals for her grandfather's gospel group, Rev. Wilkins and 3D, from time to time; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her passion for music, Mrs. Smith enjoyed the art of beautification, and she completed a program at Paul Mitchell Cosmetology School to further hone her skills; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Smith then transferred her undergraduate studies to the University of California Los Angeles, where she completed a bachelor's degree in biology; she also completed her college diploma studies in medical administration at International Career Development Center; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Smith enjoyed various careers, including freelance work as a makeup artist, hairstylist, and consultant and a professional career in healthcare and childcare industries; her work was impeccable, and she was exceptionally compassionate toward society's most vulnerable members: the elderly, the disabled, and children; and

WHEREAS, Meela Smith was a devout woman of Christian faith; she was baptized at an early age at the Hunter's Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Como, Mississippi, by her grandfather, the late Reverend John Wilkins, and later became a member of Mt. Pisgah Church in Olive Branch, Mississippi, under the leadership of Pastor Petties; and

WHEREAS, she was deeply devoted to her family, and she always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; she served as a caregiver for her mother after a cancer diagnosis and dedicated her life to bringing joy to her family and friends; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her husband, Vince Smith, she will be lovingly remembered by her parents; sister, Sheri (Fabion) Moore; three brothers, James (Tweetie) Jones, Jr., Jamon (Sherri) Jones, and Jeremy Jones; grandmother, Betty Wilkins; loving godmothers, Yolanda Labon, Lateyia Johnson, and Sabrina Deffebaugh; and goddaughter, Armani Davis; and

WHEREAS, she is further survived by her parents-in-law, Jacqueline (Terry) Webb and Harold (Etsegenet) McNeil; siblings-in-law, Dr. Harold (Jasmine) Cooper, Harold (Connie) McNeill, Travis Webb, Terry Blue, Shunknequia Byerson, Jasmine McNeill, Portia Williams, Nijia Tate, and Ileri McNeill; grandfather-in-law, Walter Smith; a host of aunties, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, extended family members, and friends; and her fur babies, Mollie, Mamba, and Charlie; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Smith leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Jameela O'Karshalla "Meela" Smith, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mrs. Smith.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.